2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F3617 Ngonde F3617

Nyakyusa
Safya, Ha Ngonde
Kukwe

ritual is powerful. If you do not perform the ritual for your father or perhaps that of your wife then you won't be a person, your body comes to an end and you die, but you are persons, you are still alive, you do not die when the body comes to an end, you take leave as in the ritual. But when they bring millet and say: 'This is so-and-so's, and this so-and-so's' (naming him whose ritual you have omitted) and brew beer and drink it, then you die. 764 775

Question: How do the dead appear to us?

Answer: They appear before our eyes at night. You dream and in the morning say: 'I was with the so-and-so's in the night, with the so-and-so's!'

Question: Where do you go (at death)?

Answer: When we die we go above. [77]

Question: That's a new thing?

Answer: Yes, indeed, formerly we said we went below; our fathers and grandfathers said that. But we now say we go below to rot and stink only but since we look toward home when they bury us perhaps the heart (*ndembula*) goes above (*kumunepa*) and that is home. We have seen this in European times in books. No, I am not a Christian and I cannot read, I've just learnt this. . . .

Kalemba (a doctor) on Mwanyamo: The *dipidi* medicine put into the beer and [illegible] as 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' is the same medicine as that which we eat at the pumpkin-seed ritual. The *dipidi* of the death ritual and the puberty ritual and the birth ritual is one and the same, but the medicine for twins is different. . . . There is one *dipidi* used in all the three rituals—puberty, birth, and death—but to it is added another medicine which is different for each of the three. *Dipidi* is our kinship, it is our blood (*dipidi ko kukoma kwetu, ya dipo [sic]*, when my wife has borne a child and no one wipes its mouth with the *dipidi* it means it is not my child, it is just a bastard from the cold, it is no relative of mine but a stranger. In the puberty ritual it is the same, we treat the girl with the *dipidi* of her husband. She moves from our lineage, from that of her father, she is now a stranger, not [illegible]. When someone has died it is the same. We eat food together with the deceased, the shade, and his blood. It is like the Swahili custom of eating each other's blood to create kinship. It means: 'You were our kinsman from above-time, but now it is finished, you are a stranger.' But the medicine for the twin ritual is separate, it is quite different. [71] [72] [73]

6. IN KINGU COUNTRY

The Kukwe ritual of death differs in detail from that of Safya and Ha/Ngonde, but it is performed with the same overt purpose: to drive away the dead from the bodies and dreams of the 764 194

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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§44 behind the huts, moving inside after delivery, on to a litter of banana leaves spread for her. Her mother-in-law attends her and treats her and the new-born child with *ikipili* medicine. She washes them in a basin made of two banana leaves, one sweet banana, one plantain, and is particularly careful to wash the infant's mouth and the mother's vagina. Powdered *ikipili* is sprinkled in the water in the form of a cross. This is done 'that the mother and child should not have diarrhoea'. The cross is a symbol of overstepping (*kukuliyapa kwa, kukuliyapa kwa*, demonstrating a cross) and is made 'because heavy ones, those who are with their husbands on the bed, will come and overstep the mother and child if they are not treated'. Mother and child are also given a roasted banana with powdered *ikipili* sprinkled on it. In bringing the *ikipili* the husband's mother acknowledges the legitimacy of the child. 'If someone does not give a child *ikipili* it is a bastard. It is as if the husband said: "Why do you insult your husband by committing adultery with others? Others have created this foetus; it is not mine!" '

The cord is tied with a shred of bark-cloth and then cut with a bamboo knife. 'An iron knife is taboo, it's a spear, other children will die from the spear disease (*ulubanga*); to use a spear is like killing someone.' The after-birth is buried in the banana plantation with a piece of the cord sticking up, and later the litter is buried at the same place. 'Only offcuts (*ubanyago*) out of those bananas growing over the burying place—no young person may do so for it's the banana grove of the liver.' The cord must be buried upright or 'the mother will not bear again'.

§45 A delayed delivery is most commonly attributed to the woman's adultery,[1] and she is pressed by the midwife to confess the name of her lover or lovers, but it is also believed that it may be due to [illegible] whether the midwife is on his side or that of the woman's father and the one who is thus indicated should pray. 'Sometimes the woman herself tells of a quarrel which would lead to suicide and then her husband or father goes to pray.'

§46 Mother and child remain in confinement until the navel cord drops off, sheltered from 'heavy ones', who should not enter or even greet the mother from the doorway, and from men, to whom both mother and child are dangerous. 'Men must not see a tiny

[1] Unlike certain other Central African peoples, the Nyakyusa do not ascribe difficulty in childbirth to the adultery of the husband.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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If a woman has difficulty in labour we officiants tell her: 'Speak! With whom did you commit adultery?' and the child comes down. When she has spoken it is born. We do not give her medicine. We give her earth.

Question: What if an illegitimate boy dies, do you perform the ritual with *ilipili*?

Lwanzaza: No, because he was a child of the long grass [i.e. illegitimate], we only treat the mother. We do not perform the ritual with the *ilipili* of the husband. If it is a girl, and she to whom we gave earth grows up, the father [i.e. her mother's husband or, if the mother was unmarried, her father] says: 'Let the husband perform the ritual, because the cattle are mine, she is my child, and that is the custom.' If they give a child of the long grass the medicine it will die, because it is not its medicine. . . . I know about it because I give children the medicine.

There is no question about the legal rights over an illegitimate child, and Neyasi and the other men held that ritual and legal control went together. Lyandileko and Kasitile, both specialists in this field, held that traditionally, at least, the *ilipili* could only be used for a legitimate child: to do otherwise was dangerous.

So important is this acknowledgement of legitimacy that in many Christian families, where other traditional rituals are ignored, the husband's mother still brings *ilipili* for his child.

As soon as the child is born a fowl—a cock for a boy, a hen for a girl—is sent to the young wife's parents, to notify them of the birth. Then her 'mothers' come 'to keep her company' (*ukwimpanje*) during her confinement, and at the end of it they take her home with them for a visit of a month or more. They bring her back to her husband, formally, with gifts of beer, food, and mats (*ukwimbeka*), just as they did after the puberty ritual. We met one [illegible] were twenty-one women carrying baskets with food or pots of beer. The grandmother was happy and excited and, dancing up to greet us, she said, breathlessly: 'That's the owner of this beer [pointing to her daughter], all those pots!' The feast was unusually lavish on this occasion. Two pots of beer, two stems of bananas, a vessel of milk, and a mat, were taken by the daughter of Chief Mwaipopo when she returned to her husband after the birth of her first child, and that seems to be the ordinary standard. The husband kills a bull calf for meat for his guests, or gives them a shilling or two.

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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Even after her return a wife may delay before cooking or drawing water again for her husband. Mwaisumo said: §76

> Some men do not let their wives cook for them until the child's body has gone black and it laughs. . . . This is mainly due to the mockery of friends, for some people refuse to come and eat with a man if the food is cooked by a woman who has recently borne a child, even though she has come out of confinement. They laugh at him and say: 'Why do you eat food prepared by a newly delivered woman? Have you no sense of disgust?' And her friends laugh at the woman, too, saying: 'Look you, the child has not yet grown at all!'
>
> MWAISUMO: Formerly a woman with a new-born child did not cook food. We said she was filthy. 'What food that she had overstepped would anyone eat? Until two months had passed she avoided cooking, then she cooked.' And she hit the child. Men should not see it for two months. It was taboo.

This is the full ritual performed for a first-born child and, some §51
say, for the first-born of each sex. For others there is no sending a fowl to the girl's parents, or bringing her back with gifts, and it does not matter where the child is born; but still the seclusion of mother and infant, treatment with *ikipolo* medicine brought by the husband's mother, and shaving are felt to be important.

We did not find any significant differences between the rituals §54
of birth in Selya and in Kukwe, but there is one rite peculiar to the Lugulu people and regarded by other Nyakyusa with somewhat shocked amusement, which is interesting because it expresses, in crude terms, a conflict between the groom and the bride's family repeatedly suggested in the ritual of Selya and Kukwe, but never openly acknowledged. We did not see this rite ourselves, but quote the account of Kakuse, the doctor, whose mother was Lugulu. Though himself a Kukwe, he speaks in the first person as if he

Kakuse: When my daughter goes to her husband, and first becomes §54
pregnant, they tell us: 'She is pregnant.' And we say: 'Oh, she is preg- §51
nant! She is pregnant! Woe has come!' When she has borne her child, the go-betweens in the marriage representing the husband come to her parents with a hen to tell them. Then later they send the go-betweens a message, saying: 'Come'. Meanwhile they have prepared huge quantities of food: porridge, and curds, and beer. And then the girl's husband calls his friends of the age-village [he does not call his relations, but his

[1] A menstruating man eats with his friends in the age-village, or is provided for by his mother, like a bachelor.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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851 brothers he will call if they are near) and they come with a bull. They arrive at nightfall.

The girl's parents meanwhile have called all their relatives (but it does not matter if some relatives do not come; it brings them no trouble) and friends of the age-village, and the boys come too. And they shut the door fast and start drinking the beer. 'They have come, they have come, let us close the door', they say. Then the go-between outside calls to us: 'We have come,' but we are silent. We answer never a word. At last we answer and ask: 'What have you brought?' And he answers: 'A bull.'

'What-sized bull?' 'A little bull.' 'He! What do you mean by bringing a little bull only?' 'Well, it's a nice big bull!'

851 578 [514] Then they come and bang on the door and we hold it shut and they bang, and bang, and then we begin insulting one another. We accuse them of filthiness, saying: 'They defaecate, they urinate!' And of incest, saying: 'You have intercourse with your mother'; and of foolishness, and they accuse us likewise. At last they burst in and the insults continue inside. They actually defaecate in the house.[1]

851 But soon we call out: 'They have entered, let us make peace, friends,' and we all sit down. Then I (the father of the girl) call on the go-between, and he sits down opposite us. I and my wife, the girl's mother, sit by the fire. Then I ask him: 'What have you brought?' 'I have brought a bull!' 'Oh! Eh!' 'I am hungry, give me some food.'

Then we discuss this for a time and agree, and we give them the food to eat and some beer. They eat, the young men snatching food over there, and our young men here, and we, the elders, eating sedately at the back.

851 578 Then, when they have eaten, we begin to insult one another again over the cattle that have been paid, the laziness and slovenliness of the bride, the dirty cooking of her mother. They scold us and we scold them. Then after a time, with insults flying, and the young men stamping and stamping, we call out: 'Silence, silence,' and the noise subsides.

851 Then our son-in-law comes to the fire at the summons of the go-between, who says: 'Praise your father,' and he says: 'You of so-and-so, son of so-and-so (he mentions all my names), our true father.' Then the go-between says: 'Praise your mother!' and he praises her: 'You, so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so, our true mother!' and he goes back and sits down. Then the bride is called by the go-between and she is made to praise first her father and then her mother. And if there is any man who eloped with the bride from her husband's, but she later returned to her husband, the lover comes too. He fears to go blind

[1] Augustine Mwaluko confirmed this saying, when the rite was mentioned, whether or not I had been told these details.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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if he does not. He does not enter the home. There would be fighting if he did! But he stands outside, and when he hears them praising he praises the parents too. No one hears him, he does it to save his sight. He comes with two or three friends but gets no food. 851

Then we give them beer, and they drink and we drink till dawn. [273] And dawn finds many in drunken sleep. Then the go-between says: 'Dawn has come, friends, let us go!' And they go off and we bid them farewell. And my son, the bride's brother, goes off with them. The husband goes home with his friends, and then the go-between and my son and daughter (these three only) come back. Then our go-between [representing the bride's father] who is on the look-out for them, says: 'They come!' and we go out and call: 'Why do you come here again?' And we throw clubs at them and drive them off. Then the go-between goes home and the two come back and we greet them and say: 'Have you slept?' And food is cooked and they eat. Then that same day the girl goes off to her husband, alone, with food that her mothers have cooked.

QUESTION: What is the reason for the custom?

KAKUWE: They have made the custom to gain wealth—that bull. The porridge (*ikyanda*) and relish (*ilisaka*) must be called *misyama*. If I, the father, or the mother, or the husband, call it porridge, then the one who does so will go blind. We Kukwe do not do this, but if one of us marries one of the people who observe it, that is, a daughter of the Lugulu, he must avoid or else he will lose his sight.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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585 between' accompanies 'the mothers-in-law' when they go to induct or instruct the bride, and the wife of her father's 'go-between' is one of the group of mothers which takes the bride to her husband. The duties of a 'go-between' do not end at marriage: the
●[351] groom's 'go-between' is responsible for taking to the bride's people the hen to announce the birth of the first child, and, among the Lugulu, the 'go-between' of the father is master of ceremonies at the ritual of vituperation.

789 602 The ideas that emerge from this analysis are, that in the *protection* rituals—after death, twin birth, spearing, binding with ropes, and death from sorcery—the parents, children, grandchildren, and some siblings, and siblings' children of the person primarily affected undergo the ritual. Links through females as well as males are recognized—daughters' children as well as sons' children attend—but they are not traced so far, and a brother's or half-brother's children attend far more often than a sister's children. Moreover, children of an unrelated co-wife perform the death ritual for a woman rather than her sister's children.

593 Wives always attend rituals in which their husbands are concerned—indeed, they often come with their children when their husbands stay away—but when the wife is concerned as a sister or daughter, her husband never accompanies her.

593 602 The closest relatives, such as own children, children of the heir or of a related co-wife, and proximate full siblings, must *all* participate, but the more distant relatives select representatives.

602 The range of relations concerned varies with the particular ritual—it is widest in the twin ritual and narrowest for an ordinary birth—and is also modified by proximity, for relatives who live near come when those in the same category living twenty miles away do not.

Affines (*abalo*) never perform a ritual together even when they are next-door neighbours and close friends, but *abalo* in one generation are *abipwa* (mother's kin) in the next, and a man and his *abipwa* can participate together, as in the protection against sorcery described. More often, however, the members of each lineage act separately.

602 621 613 Our Nyakyusa informants distinguished the officiants—*abangoge* —from those undergoing a ritual but they did not make distinctions of the sort attempted here between principals and kin who do not undergo the ritual. The distinctions they drew were between kinsmen and neighbours and between lineages. At a death

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

845 and the statement cannot be altogether devoid of truth. The influence of the mind upon the body is universally admitted: may it not be that the consciousness of guilt has the effect of contracting the muscles, and the relaxation which follows confession renders birth less painful? And may it not be that even a false confession, wrung from a despairing sufferer, brings a momentary relief sufficient to bring the child to the birth? One is glad to add, however, that many women have the courage to refuse altogether to submit to this shameful ordeal, insisting that their trouble is due, not to the wrath of the spirits, but to other causes, and that they will die rather than confess what is not true.

844 When birth has taken place, the cord is cut with a bamboo knife, and the placenta buried in the family 846 place of prayer, a small part protruding to leave a connection which insures further children. All this time no one in the house may swallow saliva. The father calls out to know the sex of the child, but he must not yet enter (for the party have entered the house as soon as possible after the birth). After a few days the mother is anointed with oil and shaved, along with her child, and powdered with medicine. Meantime intimation has been sent to the grandparents; a cock if a boy, a hen if a girl, telling them all that they wish to know. The mother may now resume her household duties.

851 But in about a week she goes to show the child to 603 her own parents, and at the end of her visit, which 431 lasts some weeks, great preparations are made by both

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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sets of grandparents. The mother sets out from her father's house with a train of friends carrying food, and a very special friend who carries the baby. Arrived at the paternal grandfather's, the food is laid down, and the child is taken by the grandfather, who presents a hoe to the maternal grandmother; and then, with the child in his arms, goes to the *ikiyinja* (the family place of prayer). He spits into the palm of his hand, and, laying it in blessing upon the child's head, he prays:

> "May it be well with you, my child. Ye spirits, be not surprised at this child of yours whom I present to you. I am old: let him take my place. Care for him in this world of sickness. I was alone, and ye have multiplied me and made me a company. Be not angry, but bless the child; and in the sight of God let him be acceptable."

The mother sits with head covered, for she must not be seen by her father-in-law. The parties now exchange gifts of food, and eat separately, after which the grandfather gives the child a gift, usually now a small coin, over which the little hand is closed. Next, the grandmother takes the infant and hands it to its mother, who, with a pot of beer on her head, goes off with her husband to their home. Arrived there, but not till then, the father takes the child in his arms, and thanks it for the gift it has brought, a foretoken of more yet to be earned.

Lingering here and there in certain families are strange customs, probably belated survivals from

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

witches, who use their power beneficently and spend their dreams in efforts to counteract the aggressor witches, *analoi*, who use their power maliciously. The great commoner is the strongest of the former type, and the 'defender of the village'. A man who earns universal unpopularity is subject to a spiritual attack from the 'defenders', and is liable to fall sick from the blast of unpopularity. Belief in this efficacy of the 'breath of men' is one of the sanctions of the accepted social order.[1]

Only magic is believed to have power to punish wrongdoers who are neither kinsmen nor members of the same chiefdom. Magic exerts an influence on the behaviour of kinsmen and affines. The witchcraft of a neglected wife may cause a man to fall sick, or that of his father-in-law may harm his children.[2] The power of witchcraft never acts between relatives, though it might between husband and wife.[3]

An aggressor witch was reported in the old days by the great commoner to the chief, who ordered the poison ordeal. If the accused failed to vomit (the dose was seldom fatal), he was proved guilty and killed or exiled, all his cows and property being taken by the chief and the victims of his aggressive witchcraft. If a private individual accused another, both were put to the ordeal; if both vomited, the accuser had to pay two cows to the other for slander; if either failed to vomit he was punished as guilty. The ordeal is now illegal, but men accused of aggressive witchcraft still find it best to fly the chiefdom. Great commoners normally used their witchcraft powers to protect their chief from attack, but if he erred they would join in the attack on him; the tribes of Ngonde had power to exert a similar constitutional check on the Kyungu.[4] If death by aggressive witchcraft was suspected, it was proved or disproved by a routine post-mortem examination and by subsequent consultation with the diviner.[5]

birth

A child should be born in its own father's house. A difficult birth is a sign of the guilt of adultery, and is eased by confession.[6] A few days after the birth the mother is isolated, shaved, and resumes her household duties. She later goes on a visit of some weeks to show the child to her own parents, returning to her husband after celebration by both sets of grandparents, and exchanges of food and beer. The birth of twins was a great misfortune, requiring the segregation and ritual purification of both parents.[7]

initiation

There was no puberty or initiation rite for boys. The initiation of a girl was really a pre-marriage rite. She went through a complicated rite to ensure fertility, in which the husband took part. The initiation [illegible] and her betrothed husband, and ceremonies in which her girl friends of the same village and his friends of his village take part. The girl is tested for virginity during the ceremonies. If she is not betrothed before puberty the initiation is carried out in a modified form, but the full significance is lost.[8]

[illegible]

[1] Wilson, A., 1938, p. 277. [2] Ibid., p. 298. [3] Ibid., A., 1938, p. 91.
[4] Ibid., J., 1939, p. 38. [5] Johnston, 1897, p. 443.
[6] Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 10; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 40–3.
[7] Ibid., pp. 40–6. According to H. H. Johnston, if the children died in succession the father was expected to kill himself, but it is possible that he is recounting a custom of the Southern Tumbuka (1897, p. 407).
[8] Ibid., 1925, p. 21; Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 10; Wilson, A., 1938, p. 298.